

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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R 251239Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7745
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2335

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: P I N T L E
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH DANY CHAMOUN

1. DCM MET WITH DANY CHAMOUN AND HIS DRUZE ADVISOR SAMI
AWAR APRIL 24. DURING CONVERSATION, DANY MADE THE FOLLOWING
POINTS:

A. HE FEARED THAT AGREEMENT REACHED APRIL 18 BY 13-MAN
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE WOULD COLLAPSE WITHIN A FEW DAYS AND
LEBANON WOULD BE NO BETTER OFF THAN IT HAD BEEN FOR PAST
THREE YEARS UNLESS THIS BAREBONES DECLARATION LED TO THE
PREPARATION OF A DETAILED PROGRAM THAT COULD BE IMPLEMENTED
BY A NEW CABINET. HE SAID REBUILDING OF THE ARMY AND THE
SECURITY FORCES IS PARTICULARLY URGENT.

B. WHILE DENYING ANY MINISTERIAL AMBITIONS, DANY
INDICATED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN FORMATION OF NEW
CABINET. (DANY HIMSELF HAS FREQUENTLY BEEN MENTIONED
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AS POSSIBILITY FOR MINISTER OF DEFENSE.) BOTH DANY AND
SAMI SAID THAT THEIR CHOICE FOR THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER
WAS SAEB SALAM, WHO HAD SHOWN THE COURAGE TO STAND UP
TO THE PALESTINIANS. IN THEIR VIEW, SALAM COULD GAIN
SUPPORT OF AT LEAST 50 PERCENT OF THE SUNNI COMMUNITY,
WITH THE HELP OF SAUDI INFLUENCE AND MONEY. ON OTHER
HAND, THE RETURN OF SALIM AL-HOSS AS PRIME MINISTER WOULD

BE A DIRECT SLAP IN THE FACE TO SAEB SALAM AND WOULD SERIOUSLY WEAKEN HIS INFLUENCE. DANY FAVORED A SMALL "SUPER-CABINET" OF THE OLD MEN, INCLUDING HIS FATHER, UNDER WHOM THERE WOULD BE A NUMBER OF UNDER SECRETARIES, EACH RESPONSIBLE FOR A MINISTRY.

C. NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, BOTH DANY AND SAMI WERE VERY SUSPICIOUS OF SYRIAN AND PALESTINIAN INTENTIONS. IN THEIR VIEW, SYRIANS WERE WORKING AGAINST A UNIFIED LEBANESE GOVERNMENT SINCE SUCH A GOVERNMENT WOULD IPSO FACTO BE MORE INDEPENDENT OF SYRIAN INFLUENCE. THEY ALSO SUSPECTED PALESTINIANS WOULD SEEK BY ALL POSSIBLE MEANS TO BREAK UP INTER-LEBANESE AGREEMENT BECAUSE IF SUCCESSFUL IT WOULD INEVITABLY RESTRICT THEIR FREEDOM OF ACTION.

2. DANY REFERRED TO RECENT INCIDENT AT THE ARMY CASERNES IN NABATIYAH AND SAID THAT HE HAD ADVISED THE GOL TO SEND AT LEAST SYMBOLIC UNITS FROM BEIRUT TO INVESTIGATE THE SITUATION AND REINFORCE THE NABATIYAH GARRISON. EVEN IF THEY HAD BEEN WIPED OUT IT WOULD HAVE UNIFIED LEBANESE ARMY AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS. DANY IMPLIED THAT IT WAS A FAILURE OF POLITICAL WILL WHICH HAD LED LOYAL LAF SOLDIERS TO ABANDON THE GARRISON WITHOUT A FIGHT.

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3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH DANY SAID THAT HE IS PLANNING A BUSINESS TRIP TO LONDON, PARIS, AND NEW YORK NEXT WEEK (HE DOES NOT REPEAT NOT PLAN TO VISIT WASHINGTON) AND INSISTED AS HE HAS BEFORE THAT HE IS NOT A POLITICIAN, HE SHOWED SIGNS OF BEING INTERESTED IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE. IF HE IS TAPPED FOR THIS POSITION, THE LAF, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, CAN BE EXPECTED TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVIST ROLE IN LEBANON.
PARKER

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